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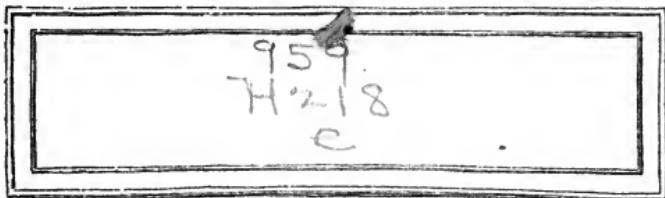
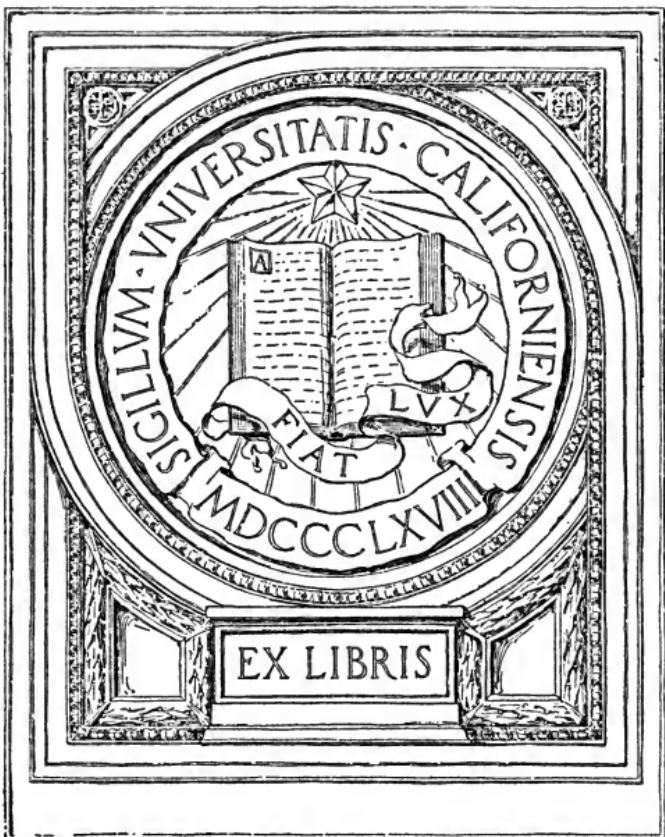
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Escape  
and  
Fantasy

George  
Rostrevor

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**ESCAPE  
AND FANTASY**



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TORONTO

# ESCAPE AND FANTASY

**Poems**

BY

GEORGE ROSTREVOR

*Hamilton*  
*III*

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1919

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## THE CHANGE

ALL the daytime I belong  
To the solemn-coated throng  
Who with grave, stupendous looks  
Study cash and ledger books,  
Or who go,  
Staid and slow,  
On sad business to and fro.

But when twilight comes, I range  
Over topics new and strange,  
Wasting all my leisure hours  
On fay birds and phantom flowers,  
Or I sing  
Some mad fling  
Through the impish evening.

Yes, and when the moon goes by  
Rocking in a foamy sky,



## 'THE CHANGE

Then I swear I'm more akin  
To the laughing Cherubin  
Than to those grave men who go,  
To and fro, to and fro,  
On sad business to and fro.

## ORPHEUS

HUSH, thou noisy nightingale,  
Let thy sorrowful song be mute.  
Orpheus, with his lute,  
Sings to the vale.

Weather-smitten, travel-worn,  
Fever-eyed and frail is he,  
Orpheus, Orpheus, the forlorn  
Of Eurydice.

Trembling like a crazy shadow  
When a gust is in the trees,  
Phantom-like he flees  
Over mere and meadow.

Twinkle on the lute his fingers.  
Hark! a ghostly music swings,  
Echoes, falls, echoes, lingers,  
Orpheus sings:—

## ORPHEUS

To-day, to-morrow,  
There is sorrow,  
But when Night,  
Holy Night,  
Putteth on  
Her sober gown,  
Then is there delight.

Take thy fill  
Of rest, rest,  
O separate will, —  
Wayward, wayward, wayward will  
Of each wild creature, take thy rest  
Lulled on the breast  
Of the cool dark hill.

Very deep,  
O baffled will,  
Be thy sleep  
On the sombre hill.  
But heart of the world, awake, awake,  
For Orpheus' sake!

## ORPHEUS

Hungry lion, do not howl!  
Supple tiger tawny-barred,  
Chattering monkey, chequered snake,  
Privy wolf and spotted pard,  
Creatures that do use to prowl  
Through the forest, let you lie,—  
Not a sound, not a cry,—  
Soothèd by my lullaby.

Cease, unquiet owl, to moan,  
Folded keep thy stealthy wings;  
Nightjar, stay thy monotone,  
Listen, listen, Orpheus sings.  
Shut you every wakeful eye  
Soothèd by my lullaby.

Very deep  
Be thy sleep,  
Cruel, cruel, cruel will,  
Very deep  
Be thy sleep  
On the sombre hill.

## ORPHEUS

But, O heart, awake, awake,  
Wake and leap for Orpheus' sake!  
Heart of all the world, awake  
For Orpheus' sake!

Cloudy waters of the sky  
Flow no longer; listening stars  
Stop their silver-wheelèd cars,  
Conquered by my lullaby.  
Each one, smitten by my spell,  
Holds him like a sentinel.

Beauty on the brow of Night  
So complete is that despair,  
Gazing like a statue there,  
Changes to a grave delight.  
Never hath the swart Night been  
So unparalleled a queen.

Very deep  
Is thy sleep,  
Wayward, wayward, wayward will,

## ORPHEUS

Very deep  
Is thy sleep  
On the sombre hill.  
But the heart, the heart is awake,  
Beating high for Orpheus' sake,  
Everywhere awake, awake,  
For Orpheus' sake.

## THE RIVER

WHY, O River, on thy breast,  
Why do the trees so sweetly rest?

Why so royal does the black barge sail  
On thy water smooth and pale?

Why does the rough-tongued river-man sing  
Like a minstrel to a king?

Why, O quiet River, do I  
See in thee so clear a sky?

## MOMENTS

I'VE seen the rich dark earth fling up  
Cuckoo-flower and buttercup,  
I've heard the meadows burst with song  
Of thrush and blackbird all day long,  
I've seen the burning sun go by  
With a pomp of cloud in the roofless sky,  
I've heard the wind whistle and shout  
And toss the tallest oaks about,  
I've seen, I've heard the flash and the call  
Of the distant thundering waterfall . . .

My soul turns back to me again  
At twilight. All the day like rain  
It has scattered itself in drops and flashes  
And moments of colour, and sudden splashes,  
Has flown and mixed with the single notes  
Quick-pouring from the song-birds' throats,  
Losing itself and multiplying,  
Living a thousand lives and dying.

## MOMENTS

My busy eyes at the fall of day  
I close: I shut the world away.  
Now no star may pierce the gloom  
Of my fragile-curtained room,  
But flowers more wonderful and trees more  
tall  
Bloom in the dark there; sweet dews fall;  
Silence cries with the ghost of sound;  
Flashes of colour and tune are found  
Linked in one. I hear, I hear  
The voice of Spring cry out to me there,  
And the voice of Spring is the voice of Love  
Crying below, around, above,  
While — in the dark of my body — his eyes  
Burn more deep than star-flushed skies.

## THOUGHTS

**If in a giant brain**

The thoughts of the world could lie,  
How darkly would each cell be lit,  
What phantoms pale would people it,  
Flocking, flocking by:  
Thoughts of things that jerk or leap,  
Things that flit in the sky or creep  
In the atomy dust, or swarm in the deep,  
Leviathan or fly!

**Fugitive, feeble, vain —**

The giant would fall asleep,  
And they in millions would be gone  
For ever to oblivion,  
Far down deep:  
Thought of toad and thought of lark,  
Crab and crocodile and shark,  
Armadillo, aard-vark,  
Terrapin and sheep.

## TIDAL, KING OF NATIONS

. . . and *Tidal, king of nations* --  
GENESIS xiv

TIDAL, King of Nations,  
Sent a proclamation forth  
To the tribes of the South  
And the clans of the North;

His word flew and travelled  
Quick as a gathering flame,  
The far-off people shook  
At the rumour of his name.

Tidal, King of Nations,  
Thy name is for thee,  
Shadowy and vast,  
An immortality.

\* \* \*

## TIDAL, KING OF NATIONS

Tidal, King of Nations —  
Lo, at the sound  
Terrible armies leap  
Crying from the ground.

High in the midst, on  
A white throne is He,  
Set as a firm rock  
In the surge of the sea.

Clear as the moon his brow is,  
But in his secret eyes  
Shadow within shadow dark  
The future lies.

In his hand glitters  
The phantom of a sword;  
The warring peoples cry  
And hail him for lord:

But within his dark eyes  
Where future time grows  
Are gentleness, mercy,  
Peace and repose.

## TIDAL, KING OF NATIONS

The nations bow and tremble,  
They do not understand,  
They only see the gleam  
Of the wrath in his hand.

\* \* \*

Tidal, King of Nations,  
Thy name is for thee, --  
Oh, far-off brotherhood! --  
An immortality.

## THE VOICE

(AN ECSTASY)

### I

#### *The Prelude*

I saw the regal sun look down  
And crown the earth with a golden crown:  
I saw his bright embraces fill  
The valley and assail the hill;  
I saw him kiss the hill I knew  
Where matted gorse and heather grew.

I heard a child go whistling by  
To school — I heard the ploughmen cry  
To their horses — in the yard  
A bantam-cock was crowing hard —  
A pensive and complacent hen  
Began to drawl . . . drawl . . . drawl  
. . . . and then  
A puppy yapping with delight  
Chased and hustled her in flight.

## THE VOICE

I took me to a tangled lane  
Hoping for quietness — in vain;  
I only in the world was mute.  
The blackbird laughed upon his flute,  
And starlings talked in wayward wise  
On creaking boughs, and up the skies  
The trembling, quick, delirious lark  
Sang until my soul was dark.

So morning, noon and all day long  
The world was multiplied with song  
And I, distracted, could not sing;  
At length, toward the evening,  
I climbed the little hill I knew  
Where matted gorse and heather grew.

Slowly,  
Slowly,  
Slowly at last the evening fell;  
Slowly beneath her drowsy spell  
The teeming brain of the world was quieted:  
The noise of day was dead.

Now might a single human thought  
Flying out, keen-wrought,

## THE VOICE

Usurp dominion of the sky, and fill  
The void of the world with a chant of love,  
and move it to one will.

So from my ingathered soul  
Softly sang I to my Love—  
Softly, yet I heard the whole  
Shining world, beneath, above,  
Echo me and ring and ring  
Through the quiet evening.

First I sang how she doth dwell  
Carven so within my mind  
That her tokens I do spell  
And her vital beauty find  
Paining me, oh everywhere  
Phantom-bright upon the air.

Morning winds with liquid tune  
Her abounding joy express;  
Azure-folded deeps of June  
Tell me of her tenderness;  
Laughingly the waterbrooks  
Mirror her untainted looks.

## THE VOICE

Trembling shadows wake in me  
    Sense of the outflowing tide  
Of her hidden rarity,  
    Till I dream her at my side,—  
And her prayed-for kisses rain  
    Through and through me, sharp with pain.

Hushed the melody I sang,  
    Earth around me rang and rang.

## II

### *The Ecstasy*

Quick a current of delight  
    Through my body laughed and  
        leapt,  
Took the dazzle from my sight,  
    From the earth my senses swept;  
Through the ringing air I sped,  
    Loosened as from bars of lead.

And my singing soul became  
    Infinite; the sea, the sky,  
Were my flesh, the mighty frame  
    Of the Universe was I;  
Mystic voices in me stirred,  
    And I cried, and I heard.

## THE VOICE

Crying how my Lady shone  
Fairer than the dawn upon  
    Snowy-crested Himalay ;  
How she fed with golden fire  
Red lamps of the Earth's desire,  
    White lamps of the Milky Way.

Crying how, if she must die,  
Sudden from the naked sky  
    Star and sun must fade and fall,  
And from every naked tree  
Foliage drop, and her death be  
    Earth's and Heaven's funeral.

So did I her glory sing  
Through the quiet evening.  
Every note and echo fell  
Crystal as a chiming bell,  
Strong and singular of beat,  
Gay and simple, clear and sweet,  
Gentle, yet with even sound  
Calling to the southern bound  
Of the world, and crying forth  
Undiminished to the north.

And in those harmonious skies  
All tempestuous energies

## THE VOICE

To such equipoise were wrought  
Never a jarring atom fought.  
There was neither jolt nor strain,  
Shock, nor weight, nor clash, nor pain,  
But I saw great Saturn float  
Buoyant as a wandering mote  
On a sunbeam, or like down  
Of thistle indolently blown.

And I felt the deepening night  
Saturated so with light  
That the very darkness seemed  
Light that more intensely dreamed;  
And the light was filled with sense  
Of Being and Omnipotence,—  
Gathered now at instant will  
To a single point, until  
I was conscious of each bird,  
Beast or creeping thing that stirred  
In a lane or covert. Then  
Consciousness would flow again  
Evenly, and life would be  
From all separation free:

## THE VOICE

Only my Belovèd shone,—  
She and I, complete, alone.

And looking down with happy eyes  
From my kingdom of the skies,  
I saw my lady stoop and give  
Glorious life for the world to live.

I saw how from the lullèd earth  
Meeting her gaze the darkness fell  
And light celestial sprang to birth,  
And flowers changed the path of hell;  
And to her lips she lifted up  
Th' essential world, created new,  
And drank and drained the sacred cup  
As sunfire drinks the morning dew.

From meadows of the noble dead,  
From fields where baffled and forlorn  
The conqueror lays his uncrowned head,  
The very life of peace was born:

## THE VOICE

And in my lady's heart of love  
    So soft, so dim that peace was felt  
As when dusk enters a deep grove  
    Where, all day long, shadows have dwelt.

From lives of sick men, clean with pain,  
    She drew a virtue like the rare  
Odour of windflowers washed with rain  
    Afloat upon the sensitive air;  
And sick men felt in their hot room  
    The cooling garden-breezes blow,  
And heaven pierce the fading gloom  
    With javelins of silver snow.

I saw the sere ungarnished tree  
    A treasury of green unlock,  
And pastures crown the foaming sea,  
    And flame enliven the dull rock;  
And frozen rivers were unsealed,  
    And waters through the desert ran,  
And like a meteor shone revealed  
    The mystic in the common man;

## THE VOICE

Whose soul enchanted, winged with dream  
And eyed with splendour, thrust her  
course  
Rapid upon the darkling stream,  
Sped by her own unconscious force,—  
Content at last, content to ride  
Free from the well-loved daily bond  
Of time and place, on the full tide  
Of Oceans unexplored beyond.

And there was song from every land,  
In every tongue, in every key,  
And every tiny lyric spanned  
The chasms of infinity:  
Yet I the Lover sang alone  
To my Belovèd: all the throng  
Of praising voices made but one  
Hushed undercurrent of my song:

“ O thou Belovèd of the Lover, thou,  
Health-giver, Purifier, Strengthener,  
Fountain, and spring, and river of the Sun.  
O thou Belovèd of the Lover, strong  
As morning or the full inflowing tide,

## THE VOICE

Calm as the evening sky above a lake.  
Thou who art one and changeless, O Belovèd,  
O thou Belovèd who art calm and strong.  
O calm Belovèd, where all passion lies  
Too deep to stir, and strong, O thou Belovèd  
In frailty that shatters force. O Love!  
Belovèd of the Lover, everlasting,  
Beyond all Death, all Change, O Love Belovèd,  
Be with the Lover always, calm and strong.”

## III

### *The Return*

So did I in Heaven sing,  
And the lilac evening  
Deeper, deeper, deeper shone.  
Fairer yet and yet more fair  
Burned my kingdom of the air.

So I sang — or *did* I sing?  
I, who still was listening.  
So I sang — yet *was* it mine,  
The Song, the Singing Voice divine?

## THE VOICE

Sudden, in a fit of mirth,  
I that was so mighty grown  
Bent me low to see the Earth  
And the little hill I knew  
Where the gorse and heather grew.

Then I cried and Heaven cried  
Loud with laughter, for I spied  
How my puny body lay  
In a coat of sombre grey  
Six foot long amid the heather  
With its two arms locked together,  
With its pinpoint eyes that burned  
Motionless and solemn turned  
In a brave unconscious stare  
On the diamonded air.

Still I looked, and in a while  
Saw the growing of a smile  
On the lips and then a yawn,  
Then a difficult breath long-drawn —  
One deep breath, and then an arm  
Stretched out, and, as if alarm  
Seized it, the whole body shook.

## THE VOICE

Then could I no longer look,  
For I felt my limbs and knew  
I was narrowed down again  
To my body, and I grew  
Quiet, fearing the disdain  
Of the stars who looked on me  
Fallen from their company.

But I heard no sound of scorn,  
Only a far echo borne  
Of the Voice whose singing moves  
And quickens every thing that loves.

## SPRING RAIN IN LONDON

HARDLY awake, I saw in the street  
The shining raindrops pelt;  
And lulled by their quick monotonous beat  
I let my languid eyes half close. I felt

The tinkle of a rivulet  
Bubbling lazily down a hill,  
Where the turf was a couch for dark violet  
And flame-eyed tormentil.

I saw the sun leaping through a cloud —  
Apollo shooting at the bladed corn —  
And the lark, a dizzy fanatic, hailing loud  
The golden god reborn.

## LOTUS EATERS

I GREW so quiet as I walked along,  
My mind so much a mirror to the wood,  
So passively open to the colour and song  
And the whole company of solitude

That past time fell from me, and time to  
come  
No longer drew me with its magnet power:  
My whole self lazily to a bee's low hum  
Listened, and watched him fumble at a  
flower.

The present held me. I was just aware  
Of the ripple and stir of muscles where  
my hand  
Lay slack against my side. I sucked live  
air,  
And drew sweet moisture from the clayey  
sand.

Now do I know how horses live, and cows,  
Minute to minute of the shining day,  
Solemn with gaze contented as they browse  
Finding their lotus in the fields of May.

## THE GREY BIRD

THE wind blows  
Heavy with spice.  
Among macaws and birds of paradise  
With plumage grey he goes.

Silence hangs like a cloud;  
Yet lives innumerable teem.  
The wild eyes of the crowd  
Of watching creatures with a sullen gleam  
The forest haunt.  
The birds flaunt  
Their vivid hues, and scream,  
Yet leave the smothering silence still su-  
preme.

And the bird with the grey wing  
Unnoticed flies. No finery or glow  
Has he to show,  
Nor in this land unhallowed will he sing.

## THE GREY BIRD

But in the tropic heat,  
When March is ablaze,  
Strange instincts beat  
In his breast.  
He is full of amaze,  
He suffers a sweet unrest,  
And though  
Unheeded still he flutter to and fro,  
Yet in foreknowledge of a gentle Spring  
He turns and fondles oft in his warm throat  
The pure, the lovely note  
He soon shall sing—  
When, in a land of the West,  
In England, over the foam,  
After long voyage his tired wings come to  
rest  
And his glad heart finds home.

Then hark how he shall spill  
His liquid miracle,  
Hark to the thrill  
Of the secret song,  
The gay tune hid so long!  
See on a twig scarce bent,  
Mid leafage cool  
Of oak or birch

## THE GREY BIRD

Or willow-fringe about a reedy pool,  
How he shall choose his perch  
And make wild music out of souls content.  
How he shall love!  
How he shall sing!  
How he shall rove  
With a careless wing!  
How in this Isle  
Of Splendid Voice,  
Home from exile  
He shall rejoice!  
How his golden song shall be spent  
Forgetting the foul, fierce continent!

## ELYSIUM

HUSHED their feet fall  
On the dewy grass:  
In robe rhythmical  
Shining they pass:

Lovers who for bliss  
Grave and rare and deep  
Need no clasp, or kiss,  
Or lovers' sleep.

## ETERNITY

MEN who are wise in secret lore  
    Well argue and avow  
That fugitive Time shall be no more —  
No change, no after, no before,  
    But one eternal Now.

Yet I will dream Eternity  
    Only a nobler Time,  
Where all the past shall gathered be  
And hours all of memory  
    In each new hour chime:

Triumphing easily over Death;  
    Showing the sign of power  
Of one who goes with even breath,  
Who hurrieth not nor lingereth,  
    Harmonious with his hour:

## ETERNITY

A march, full-speed, from thought to  
thought,  
A music more sublime  
Than holy poet ever caught  
From magic choirs, and tuned and wrought  
In miracle of rhyme.

## THE SEA-MAID

I HEARD an immortal, under the sea,  
Singing the beauty of change and death.  
Oh lovelier than light was she,  
And Araby was in her breath.

She lay in a hollow of stainless air  
Roofed and walled with a crystal gleam;  
No light wind stirred to quiver her hair  
Or loose from her eyes the banded dream.

Her voice was the piping voice of a child,  
Shrill, pathetic. I do not know  
Whether I wept or whether I smiled  
To hear her chant of curious woe.

The sea-maid sang,  
“Never shall I die.  
The evil eye,  
The spine, the fang

## THE SEA-MAID

Have not any power,—  
No spell, no charm  
May wither or harm  
My beauty's flower.

For, I suppose,  
I am fair, more fair  
Than any rose  
Or earth-bloom rare,

Or maid of the earth,  
Or, faint and far,  
Heaven's dark birth  
Of a radiant star.

And yet they are crowned  
With a joy not mine,  
With a light divine  
Who have found, have found

The secret of change,—  
They are born, they grow,  
They are dark, they glow,  
They are new, wild, strange.

## THE SEA-MAID

But I remain  
    Immortal, I  
Who am fain, oh fain  
    To change or die.

\*       \*       \*

Once was a time  
    I found the wreck  
Of a ship sublime  
    With a masted deck:

I peeped through the hull  
    And what should it hold  
    But shimmering gold  
And a shining skull

And broken glass  
    And twisted steel,  
    And a steering-wheel  
Of oak and brass.

I loved them and watched them day by day,  
I watched their beautiful slow decay.  
I watched them soften and break and rust,  
And thicken with weeds and fall to dust.

## 'THE SEA-MAID

But when they were crumbled quite, there  
came  
The fish that are centuries-through the same,  
Their lifted lids that ought to be wise  
Arching high over vacant eyes.

With gaping mouth and sloping chin,  
And face fixed hard in a solemn grin,  
They softly murmured, *The passing hour  
Over our beauty has no power.*

I turned. I looked in my crystal glass.  
My splendour was bright as ever it was.  
And I wept, and I weep, that I should re-  
main  
Immortal, unchanging, without a stain."

## THE CELL

WHEN from the hush of this cool wood  
I go, Lord, to the noisy mart,  
Give me among the multitude,  
I pray, a lonely heart.

Yea, build in me a secret cell  
Where quietness shall be a song:  
In that green solitude I'll dwell.  
And praise Thee all day long.

## THE ASCETICS

Ages long the hills have stood  
A solitary brotherhood,  
Ages long with sinews bare  
They have shouldered the keen air,  
They have wrestled with the skies  
Hiddenly for a dark prize.

Merry Spring with her wanton train  
Tiptoes, tiptoes by in vain ;  
Ye, O hills, never behold  
Her brave dust of green and gold  
Flashing by, the pride, the mirth,  
The myriad fluttering of the earth.

This wild magic ye have lost —  
Tell me, at so bitter cost,  
What the guerdon ye have won?

## THE ASCETICS

“ Speech with the moon, speech with the sun;  
Valiancy to meet unbowed  
The challenge of the thundercloud,  
And, to quicken us for fresh wars,  
Gay communion with the stars.”

## CONSPIRACIES

THE valley seemed a single throat  
Singing when the blackbird sang,  
So true complete and pure his note,  
And through so clean an air it rang:  
Trees in a golden rapture stood  
Unshaken; their dark shadows fell  
And lay locked by the river-flood  
In level quiet: blackbird's bell  
And hollow-shining air and tree  
And river made conspiracy  
And cast on me a spell.

Deep in my heart the holy stream,  
The stream of quietude, was born,  
Whose waters wandering clouds of dream  
And marvellous idle shapes adorn;

## CONSPIRACIES

My breath was like the breath of a child

Asleep, — yet rooted in repose,

Multitudinous swift and wild

My branching, flowering thoughts arose.  
So heart, breath, mind, while I spoke no word,  
Conspired. Suddenly I heard

My song with the blackbird's close.

## A RHYME OF FAITH

SAY ye “ Lo the heavens frown,  
Soon the thundercloud shall burst,  
Towering faith shall be flung down.  
We — thank God — expect the worst.”

Cowardly blasphemers, hark!  
*Credo* shall my motto be,  
*Credo* — all the sky is dark —  
*Quia Impossibile.*

## THE SHINING POND

AGAINST the sky's pale rim  
The cottage and the trees stood dim.  
But in the glow,  
More tense,  
Of the little shining pond that lay below,  
The darkened outlines were drawn clear,  
Sharp to my sense.

And gazing there  
My vision became  
Empty and passive, no more than a frame  
For the silver water that burned and  
burned . . . .

At last, when I turned,  
My soul was a mirror, on whose surface lay  
Without a flaw  
Each momentary thing I saw, —  
Then slipped away.

## THE SHINING POND

And I heard  
Each faint noise,  
Hardly listening.

I heard  
The noise of the cockchafers around me, —  
Not only the sound  
As they boomed in their flight,  
Above, in the dim light,  
But as they busily stirred  
Loosening  
Heavy body and horny wing,  
Blundering free  
Out of the thicket of the may-tree.

I saw the flower look up pale-eyed  
From the tangled grass,  
And the pale moth climb up, half awake, with  
quivering wing,  
And still to the side  
Of the sedges cling, —  
Then like a ghost through the brown air  
pass.

## THE SHINING POND

And nowhere,  
Everywhere,  
The fall,  
Hollow and clear,  
Of the cuckoo's sounding call.

And yet so quiet . . . every tree  
(But most the poplar tree,  
Shooting up  
Confidently  
To the sky's white cup)  
Appeared eternal.

Suddenly, out beyond  
The dark, I heard a chime.  
It told of eternity, not of time,  
It told that the quiet hour was one  
With the quiet ages gone,  
With the quiet hours to be  
Eternally.

Shadow crept over the shining pond.  
I fell into a deep  
Trance, an illumined sleep.

## THE HAUNTED STREET

ONLY the faint-echoing fall of my feet  
Sounded in the empty street,  
Where noisily an hour or so ago  
The townpeople wandered — men, all sorts  
and types,  
Swinging leisurely to and fro,  
Laughing and lounging, pulling at their  
pipes;  
Big-featured women; boys with caps aslant  
To hint them men of the world; slim girls  
with scant  
White summer dresses that in dubious light  
Fluttered and gleamed to the sight  
Like pallid moth-wings.

Now the populous street  
Was empty: not a phantom lingered there,  
Not a ghost of sound on the air  
Save, as I passed, for my echoing feet.

The moon was hidden; hardly a candle shone  
At any upper window, and the stars  
Were dim as candles: from the shops and  
bars

## THE HAUNTED STREET

The glimmer of light was gone.  
A few arc-lamps at intervals threw  
Mock moonlight on the mimic waterway  
Of the wheel-burnished road;  
And the road lay  
Cool and rejoicing, lightened of its load  
Of travelling life — as a tired face may lie  
Smooth of its furrows, the unquiet day  
Forgotten, the importunity  
Of thought and emotion folded away  
And shuttered off by Sleep.

Only my footsteps sounded in the road.

Suddenly I stopped. For I felt a faint light  
creep  
Up to me and touch me, and lo, behind a  
cloud-veil  
The harvest Moon gradually climbing the  
ascent  
To the open firmament!  
The vapours like lit foam  
Dripped and glittered, as I watched her  
battle against the tide,  
Then huddled again more close and strove to  
hide

## THE HAUNTED STREET

Her scattering silver with dull monochrome;  
Yet with a final stroke did she prevail,  
Unflinching out of the stormy water sail,  
Astonish the dark night, and roam  
Splendid in triumph on her ocean-home.

And, as I watched, it seemed  
My eyes were nothing but hollows filled to  
the brim with light,  
And my body was unsubstantial, and the  
flood unearthly streamed  
Through and through me, body and soul,  
immovable, absorbed in sight.

Along the sombre rank  
Of ordinary houses the lustre spread  
Until their level surfaces showed blank  
And staring-white, and dead.  
No longer now as images of Sleep  
Could I feel them, folding away  
In recesses deep  
The voices and the passing feet of day:  
Rather I felt them solid, cold, intense,  
Shining on the glass of my moonlit sense

## THE HAUNTED STREET

Like naked tombstones. They seemed to me  
The only reality:  
My conscious being  
Was from its centre all  
Diverted to its outward wall,  
From the thinking and willing soul to the  
touching, seeing,  
Receptive surface. I lost  
All sense of separation. I was one  
With the tomblike stone.  
The bar of my humanity I crossed,  
Drawn outward as the houses drew more  
near,  
Till they and I for body had only a gleam-  
ing wall,  
For spirit a vague fear.

The pulse of Time stopped.

There was no sound  
Anywhere,  
No motion in the street around,  
In my soul's eclipse I could not stir.

## THE HAUNTED STREET

Yet some hidden impulse suddenly broke the  
spell,  
For inward, inward, struggling through the  
barrier  
Of my dumb sense I drove. I smote the silent  
bell  
At the door of my heart angrily, bidding it  
answer me  
With a semblance of actual sound. Driven  
by the tyranny  
Of tangible outward horror into my soul I  
fought,  
Striving to win the images that dwell  
In the quiet inmost rooms of intricate-carven  
thought.

There I conjured a vision of summer's ripe  
content,  
Gold corn in the valley, gold gorse on the  
hill,  
The gold sun shining, the air full of scent,  
The common turf paved with gold tor-  
mentil;  
The air basking lazily, full of the sound of  
bees,  
And a slow stream washing the boughs of  
trailing willow-trees.

## THE HAUNTED STREET

There I found a garden where tall hollyhocks  
And double-flowered larkspurs towered  
side by side,  
Groups of slender columbine and crimson-  
hearted phlox,  
Old-fashioned lavender and pink and Lon-  
don pride:  
And in that close and quiet garden did I find  
The faces of my dearest friends, intimate  
and kind.

But a hurry of other faces like a shadow-  
show,  
Faces remote and strange, crowded unbidden  
before me,  
Faces at first I did not know . . .  
Yet some of them bore me  
Manifest hate or love, — gazing on me  
As a familiar friend or enemy.  
Gradually I felt the answering passions stir  
And days forgotten from a buried past rise;  
Gradually  
Like objects with pale outlines whitening the  
gloom  
Of a dark room,

## THE HAUNTED STREET

Out of a misty blurr  
The faces grew familiar to my eyes.

And yet, as I dimly knew  
With a dazed, half-conscious knowing,  
These images coming and going,—  
These faces old and young  
That grew  
In a moment, unfolded  
And faded,—out of a past that never was  
mine were sprung:  
Not mine, although they so remoulded me  
Under their strong control  
That memory seemed to be slowly drawn up  
out of my soul  
To join them and make them a part  
Of my own years,  
Linking them to the passions of my heart,  
Old hopes and old fears.

In a while shone out  
Distinct among them all, beneath a rout  
Of dusky hair, one face  
Of quick eager impulsive grace;  
And memory arose in me till I burned  
With a full-kindled fire

## THE HAUNTED STREET

Of worship and love, seeing no failure, no  
flaw

In her loveliness. . . .

then memory turned,  
Memory and the strength of desire,  
To hate, fierce hate, hate fiercer for a mem-  
ory of shame,

Of a wrong that I had done to her. I saw  
With different eyes her beauty and I hated it.  
Darkness and agony were in me: I shook: I  
bit on my lip; there was dew

Of sweat on my hand, on my forehead; I  
knew

My soul no longer was mine but lit with the  
flame

Of alien passions, possessing me, driving  
me . . .

Emptily,

Emptily on either side the motionless line  
Of tomblike houses gaped upon me—

Their emptiness spoke, they gave me an an-  
swer, they told

That only the cold  
Bodies of those who slept  
Lay in their hold:

## THE HAUNTED STREET

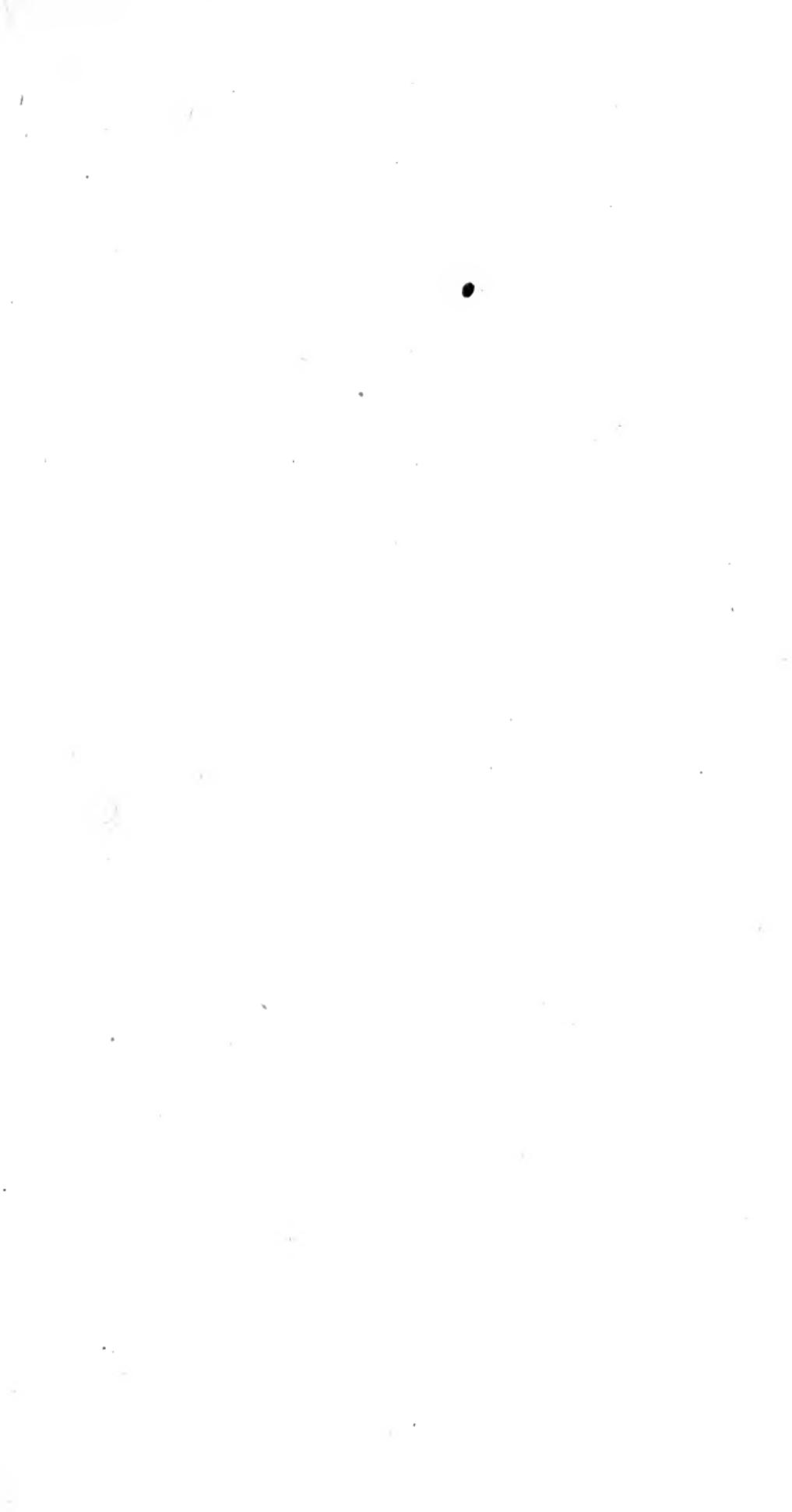
The hot unsleeping passions were abroad  
Thronging the white road,  
Pressing around me, into me. They had  
crept  
Deep into me more subtle than sleep;  
My soul was strangled: I could not shake  
them off: I struggled in vain . . .

But with a saving throb of pain  
The power of motion came to me again,  
And down the length of that echoing street  
of dread,  
While the beautiful mockery of the white  
moon still looked down  
On the sleeping town,  
Quick in the stillness I fled.

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